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Sustainable development: protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind; implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

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I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 60/197 of 22 December 2005, invited the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[1] to report to it at its sixty-first session on the work of the Conference of the Parties. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Outcome of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

1. Summary

2. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Montreal, Canada, from 28 November to 9 December 2005. It included the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

3. The conference received much political attention. Momentum had built up after the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on 16 February 2005, and with the political positions on climate change adopted at the Gleneagles meeting of the Group of Eight and the 2005 World Summit.

4. Participation in the conference reached a record high with a total of 9,500 participants, including the participation of many environmental non-governmental organizations. Over 120 ministers attended the high-level segment.

5. One major outcome of the conference was the opening of a two-track approach to discussions to determine the future directions of global action on climate change. Under the Kyoto Protocol, an open-ended ad hoc working group had been established to discuss further commitments by industrialized countries, to be complemented by preparations for a broader review of the Protocol to be held at the second session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Under the Convention, a dialogue process was initiated with the aim of exchanging experiences and analysing strategic approaches for long-term cooperative action to address climate change. It will address action on adaptation and ways and means of realizing the full potential of technology and market-based opportunities, all in the context of advancing development goals in a sustainable way.

6. As at 10 July 2006, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had 189 parties and the Kyoto Protocol had been ratified by 164 States.

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

2. Outcome of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

7. At its first session, the Conference of the Parties adopted 36 decisions, completing the institutional architecture of the Kyoto Protocol and strengthening implementation measures.

8. In the first week of the conference, the Marrakesh Accords, a series of decisions defining the institutional details of the Kyoto Protocol, were adopted, thus making the Kyoto Protocol fully operational. The decisions had been prepared by the Conference of the Parties at its seventh session in Marrakesh in 2001 and completed in the following years, but were still subject to formal approval by the Conference of the Parties.

9. Although the Marrakesh Accords also included an agreement to set up a compliance committee, the legal form for adopting compliance procedures had remained open. The Parties adopted the compliance procedures and decided to commence consideration of a possible amendment to the Protocol on compliance. They also elected the members of the committee, which would oversee operation of the compliance regime of the Kyoto Protocol. The committee began its work in March 2006 and is developing its rules of procedure and operating practices.

10. With the adoption of the Marrakesh Accords, the three "flexibility mechanisms" of the Kyoto Protocol are now formally approved. They include emission trading and joint implementation, which are both limited to industrialized country parties to the Kyoto Protocol with quantified greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. They also include the clean development mechanism, a unique instrument that combines support to sustainable development in developing countries through private investment and technology transfer with enhancing cost-effectiveness of required emission reductions in industrialized countries. The mechanism had been launched under the Convention and has seen exponential growth over the past year. From a few dozen registered projects at the end of 2005, the mechanism had grown to 230 projects by early July 2006, with over 570 more projects in the pipeline (at 10 July 2006). Projects currently in the mechanism pipeline are expected to reduce emissions by over 1 billion tons by 2012.

11. The Conference of the Parties also agreed on steps to strengthen the mechanism, by streamlining its procedures and increasing the financial resources to support its governance structure.

12. The parties established the Joint Implementation Supervisory Committee and elected its members. The Committee had a successful start at its first meeting in February 2006.

13. Global carbon markets were strengthened at the conference. The decision to open the way for negotiations on commitments beyond 2012 provided a signal to the markets, giving them a longer-term perspective that encouraged investments with paybacks beyond 2012. The many business representatives present in Montreal had advocated the strengthening of carbon markets.

14. One of the critical vehicles for supporting activities in developing countries is the Adaptation Fund established under the Kyoto Protocol. The Conference of the Parties adopted a decision giving initial guidance for the operation of the Fund.

15. The parties noted the importance of capacity-building in developing countries and economies in transition for the successful implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. Two corresponding decisions on capacity-building relating to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol in developing countries and in economies in transition were adopted, setting up a framework for activities in those areas.

16. The Conference of the Parties agreed to initiate a process to consider further commitments for industrialized countries for the period beyond 2012 in accordance with article 3, paragraph 9, of the Protocol. It established for that purpose an open-ended ad hoc working group of parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which will report on its progress to the Conference of the Parties at each session. The group will aim to complete its work and have its results adopted by the parties as early as possible to ensure that there is no gap between the first and the second commitment periods of the Kyoto Protocol. The first meeting of the group was convened in May 2006, and the second meeting is to be held in conjunction with the second session of the Conference of the Parties in Nairobi in November 2006.

3. Outcome of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

17. The 13 formal decisions adopted by the Conference, some of which are noted below, will further advance measures to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impact.

18. Major progress under the Framework Convention was made in the area of adaptation, a five-year work programme for the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change was adopted. The work programme will develop the technical basis for increasing resilience to the potential impact of climate change.

19. The Conference of the Parties considered the report of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which contained information on its major activities in its function as the operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention. It urged GEF to continue its efforts to mobilize resources additional to those already pledged and to support the implementation of project activities under the Special Climate Change Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund. The Conference also adopted a decision to provide additional guidance to GEF, including a request to consider whether supporting carbon capture and storage technologies, in particular related capacity-building activities, would be consistent with its strategies and objectives and, if so, how they could be incorporated within its operational programmes.

20. The Conference of the Parties adopted a decision providing further guidance for the operation of the Least Developed Countries Fund. It requested GEF to develop a co-financing scale for supporting activities identified in national adaptation programmes of action, and to develop flexible modalities to ensure balanced access to resources. The parties recognized the contribution of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group supporting the preparation of the programmes of action and decided to extend its mandate.

21. The parties considered the terms of reference for the Expert Group on Technology Transfer, a constituted body tasked with enhancing the implementation of article 4, paragraph 5, of the Convention. The Conference welcomed the progress

in implementation of the framework and requested parties to express their views on the status and continuation of the Group.

22. The Conference requested parties to identify research needs and priorities to support the implementation of the Convention, and assigned to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice the task of regular consideration of research needs and systematic observation relating to the Convention.

23. The implementation of the Convention continues. As at 6 June 2006, 132 of 148 developing countries had submitted their initial national communications, and five least developed countries had prepared national adaptation programmes of action to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change.

24. Industrialized countries were requested to submit their fourth national communications to the secretariat by 1 January 2006. As at 28 June 2006, 24 of 36 countries had submitted their fourth national communication.

25. The Conference of the Parties approved the continuation of the institutional linkage of the secretariat of the Framework Convention to the United Nations until such time as a review was deemed necessary by either the Conference of the Parties or the General Assembly. The Secretary-General was invited to seek the endorsement of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session for the continuation of the linkage.

26. The budget for the secretariat of the Framework Convention for the coming biennium was adopted. That decision had already been prepared in May 2006 by a subsidiary body and was adopted without any further discussion.

4. High-level segment

27. The joint high-level segment of the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh session and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at its first session was addressed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Louise Fréchette. This was followed by an address by the Prime Minister of Canada, Paul Martin, who called for a global response and action by all countries.

28. The Conference of the Parties, pursuant to an initiative by its President, adopted a decision launching a dialogue on long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the Convention. The dialogue, in the form of a non-binding exchange of views and ideas in support of enhanced implementation of the Convention, will focus on four areas: advancing development goals in a sustainable way; addressing action on adaptation; realizing the full potential of technology; and realizing the full potential of market-based opportunities. The first dialogue workshop was held in May 2006 and the second is scheduled for November 2006 in conjunction with the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

29. **The General Assembly may wish, inter alia:**

(a) **To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;**

(b) **To note the outcome of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, hosted by the Government of Canada from 28 November to 9 December 2005;**

(c) **To approve the continuation of the institutional linkage of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to the United Nations until such time as a review is deemed necessary by the Conference of the Parties or the General Assembly;**

(d) **To invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference.**

II. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/201 of 22 December 2005, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-first session on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The present report has been prepared in response to the resolution. It also outlines the status of the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

B. Outcome of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties

2. The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was held in Nairobi from 17 to 28 October 2005. A brief oral report on that session was presented to the General Assembly by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on 2 November 2005. The Conference of the Parties adopted a number of decisions, including decisions relating to the strengthening of the implementation of the Convention. Special emphasis was put on the improvement of the work of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention as well as on a strategy to foster that instrument in the light of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit submitted to the Conference. The Conference of the Parties advanced the work of the Committee on Science and Technology by adopting several decisions aimed at improving its efficiency and effectiveness. Other decisions relate to the mobilization of resources, in particular those provided through the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

3. The Conference of the Parties also adopted the programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007. For the first time, the Conference reviewed the relation between the secretariat of the Convention and its host country and adopted a decision on that matter.

1. Strengthening the process of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and its implementation

4. The Conference of the Parties focused on Africa, aware that African country parties continue to face considerable difficulties, especially in accessing funding to support national undertakings to eradicate poverty and diversify livelihoods while combating desertification, land degradation and rural poverty. The Conference urged African country parties to strengthen national coordinating bodies with a view to effectively influencing policymaking processes in order to deliver coordination and mainstreaming functions. In that regard, the Conference of the Parties provided guidance to capacity-building activities, partnership-building, mainstreaming, mobilization and channelling of resources for the implementation of national action programmes in Africa.

5. Strengthening the implementation of the Convention implies reforming its institutions to adapt them to new challenges. In that respect, the Conference of the Parties initiated necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including a review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations under the Convention and improved procedures for the communication of information, as well as of the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties.

6. The Conference of the Parties also stressed the need for strategic guidance and targets in order to foster the implementation of the Convention, as stated in article 4 of the Convention. In that regard, the Conference reviewed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and decided to establish an ad hoc intergovernmental intersessional working group with the mandate to review the report in full and, building on the results of that review and other inputs, to develop a draft 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

7. The working group would consider major issues, such as to enhance parties' capacities to integrate Convention objectives into regional, subregional and national development plans and strategies; to engage the international community in setting benchmarks and defining indicators for progress; and to make the Convention a centre of excellence in scientific and technical knowledge and best practices.

8. The group would also consider ways and means to improve synergies with other processes. It would, inter alia, consider how to enhance synergies between combating desertification and land degradation; climate change mitigation and adaptation; biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; how to ensure that enhanced synergies contribute to the fulfilment of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, as agreed at the Millennium Summit; how to improve political will and commitment to the Convention; how to improve the engagement and commitment of parties to the Convention; and how to ensure a better balance between the resourcing of the secretariat and the core functions that the parties are asking it to perform.

9. The working group would also reflect on resource mobilization by reviewing how to ensure better targeting of existing resources and how to mobilize new resources for the implementation of the Convention; how to build the capacities of affected developing country parties to access financial resources, especially GEF, for funding activities to combat desertification and land degradation; and how to improve resourcing for activities to combat desertification and land degradation, especially through GEF.

10. The Conference of the Parties also noted the importance of the issue of desertification in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It invited the parties, the Executive Secretary and other relevant stakeholders to prepare for, and participate in, the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Commission with a view to demonstrating that the development and promotion of new and renewable energy sources in drylands constituted a critical issue for sustainable development, access to energy and energy efficiency; and that the implementation of action programmes under the Convention can make a significant contribution in that context. In 2008 and 2009, at its sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, the Commission will take up thematic clusters on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. In that regard, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to include an agenda item on the

preparation of those sessions in the agenda of the eighth session of the Conference, and requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a background paper, drawing in particular on the outcomes of the third and fifth sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, for discussion at the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session.

2. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology

11. The Conference reviewed the activities of the Group of Experts and encouraged the parties, through their national focal points, to revise and update the database on their national experts already on the roster of independent experts, and to propose new candidates in order to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines, social scientists, women, non-governmental organizations and all individuals with expertise in the field of desertification. The Conference also encouraged parties to develop initiatives on traditional knowledge in collaboration with other institutions and organizations and invited them to protect, promote and use traditional knowledge by involving local experts and local communities, and to foster integration of traditional and modern knowledge in combating desertification.

12. Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged the need to improve the country profile as a promising tool for presenting data on the implementation of the Convention by using benchmarks and indicators, and requested the Group of Experts to give special attention to participatory and integrated approaches to benchmark and indicator systems for the monitoring and assessment of the socio-economic and biophysical aspects of desertification. The parties were encouraged to develop and use indicators to assess the impact of intervention measures in order to indicate progress in implementing the Convention.

13. The Conference furthermore invited relevant United Nations organizations, international bodies, agencies and developed country parties to assist developing country parties in the development of early warning systems by providing technological and financial support. Finally, the Conference adopted a comprehensive programme of work for the Committee on Science and Technology.

14. Taking note of the interest of the Committee on Science and Technology in the relationship between climate and land degradation, monitoring and assessment, soil and water conservation, renewable energies, vulnerability and livelihood improvement, the Conference of the Parties decided that the priority theme for discussion by the Committee at its eighth session would be "The effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement".

3. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

15. The Conference of the Parties decided to conclude with the Council of GEF a memorandum of understanding, and invited the secretariats of GEF and the Convention to make appropriate arrangements to implement it. It also welcomed the country pilot partnerships of GEF and the TerrAfrica initiative of the World Bank as potential tools for strengthening partnership-building for the implementation of the Convention, and recommended coordination between those processes and consideration of their expansion if found to be successful.

16. Aware of the importance of the implementation of the Convention at the national level, the Conference of the Parties invited GEF to make financial resources available for capacity-building activities in affected country parties implementing the Convention and to facilitate coordination between GEF and Convention focal points at the country level to enable GEF to better respond to the needs of the Convention process.

17. The Conference of the Parties also reviewed the implementation of the operational programme on sustainable land management. It welcomed the GEF Council decision taken at its meeting in May 2003, by which it recognized that, in the framework of capacity-building projects to be funded under Operational Programme 15, the elaboration of national, subregional and regional action programmes and national reports were considered components, and invited GEF to implement that decision when assisting developing country parties. In the same vein, the Conference welcomed the GEF Council decision taken at its meeting in May 2003 by which it was agreed that, in the implementation of Operational Programme 15, the process of determining incremental costs should be made more transparent and its application more pragmatic, and invited GEF to ensure its appropriate application.

4. Activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies

18. At the Conference of the Parties, the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change prepared a joint paper on options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions. The Conference of the Parties also reviewed the collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and expressed its appreciation to the secretariats for the work undertaken in developing their joint work programme on biological diversity in dry and sub-humid lands. It encouraged parties to take the necessary measures to ensure its effective implementation with a view to achieving the relevant 2010 targets.

19. The Convention of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to pursue consultations and closer collaboration with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other interested organizations with a view to fostering joint initiatives related to sustainable forest management.

5. Budget

20. The approved budget of the secretariat of the Convention and the Global Mechanism for the biennium 2004-2005 was negatively affected by fluctuations in the euro/United States dollar exchange rate. Both organizations are based in the euro zone. For the biennium 2006-2007, the Conference of the Parties adopted a number of measures to reduce the risk of budget loss due to currency fluctuations in the programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and subsequent bienniums. The Joint Inspection Unit made a recommendation asking the Conference of the Parties to consider adopting euro budgeting, and a single currency system of assessment, the euro, beginning with the biennium 2008-2009. In that respect, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to determine with the assistance of

United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva the costs of any changes to the Integrated Management Information System and any other related costs of accounting for the activities of the secretariat in euros, including holding contributions as euros rather than United States dollars, and to report back to the President of the Conference of the Parties at its seventh session regarding the costs necessary to implement such changes. More importantly, it decided to introduce the euro as the budget and accounting currency from the beginning of the biennium 2008-2009.

C. Celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

1. General considerations

21. By its resolution 58/211, the General Assembly decided to declare 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, with a view to raising global public awareness of the increasing challenges posed by desertification, to safeguard the biological diversity of arid lands covering one third of the planet and to protect the knowledge and traditions of affected communities.

22. At its seventh session the Conference of the Parties thoroughly reviewed the report of the Executive Secretary on the preparation for the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. The Conference invited those parties, international and non-governmental organizations that had not yet done so to inform the secretariat of activities envisaged for the year.

23. The Conference of the Parties also requested the secretariat to make available to the parties and observers a consolidated list containing all activities reported in order to coordinate the information and avoid overlapping of activities. Accordingly, a specially dedicated website http://www.iydd.org has been put into place to provide background information on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the International Year of Deserts and Desertification to the public at large, relevant news for the media, access to the national committees established in some countries and a list of activities updated on a daily basis.

24. Likewise, the Conference of the Parties had encouraged country parties to make voluntary contributions to the Supplementary Fund in order to ensure adequate implementation of resolution 58/211. It is to be underlined that the Governments of Italy, Switzerland and Finland have effectively contributed or confirmed a pledge to the Fund as a way to support major international meetings planned for 2006, such as the Beijing International Conference on Women and Desertification, a meeting in Buenos Aires on global implementation assessment of the Convention, the Bamako International Conference on Youth and Desertification and other public information activities. In addition, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development have concluded agreements with the secretariat with a view to supporting targeted public information activities, including the production of joint publications, media and parliamentary alerts and training of journalists.

25. In a concerted inter-agency effort to raise the visibility of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, World Biodiversity Day was observed on 22 May 2006 under the theme "Protection of the biological diversity of the

drylands". Furthermore, UNEP together with the Government of Algeria celebrated in Algiers World Environmental Day on 5 June under the theme "Deserts and desertification: don't desert drylands". Finally, the World Day To Combat Desertification 2006 had the theme "The beauty of deserts — the challenge of desertification".

2. Major international events for the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

26. **Beijing Conference on Women and Desertification.** The Conference was held from 29 May to 1 June 2006 and was organized by the Governments of Algeria, China and Italy and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The Conference highlighted the fundamental role played by women as the main stakeholders in managing natural resources, food production and meeting household needs, such as energy and water in rural areas affected by desertification and drought. It was agreed at the Conference that women are severely affected by land degradation and desertification, making their conditions the most difficult and insecure in all societies. The participants identified education, health and the management of natural resources, particularly land and water, energy and food security as major priorities for women in areas affected by drought and desertification, and provided targeted recommendations in order to improve those aspects.

27. **Civil society and desertification.** The conference, scheduled for September 2006 in Montpellier, France, is being organized in conjunction with the European Networking Initiative on Desertification, the Government of France, the city of Montpellier and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

28. **Bamako Conference on Youth and Desertification.** The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in collaboration with the Governments of Finland, Germany, Italy and Mali, will hold an international conference on Youth and Desertification in Bamako as one of several major conferences to mark the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

29. **Global assessment of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.** The conference will be organized in Buenos Aires immediately after the fifth session of the Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

30. **Desertification and migration.** The Government of Spain has indicated that a symposium will be held from 25 to 27 October 2006 in Almeria, Spain. Consultations for the organization of the symposium with the host country are ongoing and invitation letters to focal points and non-governmental organizations will be sent in the near future.

D. Action requested of the General Assembly

31. The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties was held after the 2005 World Summit, at which world leaders resolved to address the causes of desertification and land degradation and the poverty resulting from them. The Conference of the Parties also adopted a number of decisions to strengthen the

process and implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, particularly in the light of the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit. Intergovernmental working groups were established by the Conference of the Parties to carry out the envisaged reforms.

32. The General Assembly, convinced that pockets of poverty are widespread in rural and degraded lands, has long recognized that the Convention constitutes a major international instrument that could contribute to poverty eradication and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Assembly may therefore wish to renew the commitments of the international community, as was done at the 2005 World Summit, to allocate more financial resources to rural development, particularly for the rehabilitation of degraded lands. The Assembly may also wish to lend its support to the current debate on how to strengthen the Convention and its implementation.

33. The Conference of the Parties has recognized the importance of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development for raising international awareness of and commitment to the implementation of the Convention through their thematic focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification, and the need for timely and substantive preparations for input of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to this process. The Assembly may wish to guide the Convention on a way forward.

34. At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly, following up its resolutions 52/198 of 18 December 1997 and 56/196 of 21 December 2001 on institutional linkage and related administrative arrangements between the United Nations Secretariat and the secretariat of the Convention by its resolution 60/201, approved the continuation of the current institutional linkage and related administrative arrangements for a further five-year period, to be reviewed by both the General Assembly and the Conference of the Parties no later than 31 December 2011. The Conference of the Parties adopted a number of reforms requiring the Assembly's support, particularly the introduction of the euro as the budget and accounting currency from 2008-2009. The Assembly may wish to support this move aimed at protecting the Convention budget against the negative impact of currency fluctuation.

35. With regard to the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, following up its resolution 60/200, the General Assembly may wish to request the designated focal points to assess the impact of the Year on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the awareness raised concerning the need to protect drylands. Such an assessment will be submitted for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session.

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/202 of 22 December 2005, the General Assembly invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to continue reporting on the ongoing work regarding the Convention, including the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The present report has been prepared in response to that invitation.

B. Overview of the outcome of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

2. The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Curitiba, Brazil, from 20 to 31 March 2006, was preceded by regional preparatory meetings, a brainstorming session on the impact of avian flu on wildlife and an expert meeting on protected areas. It was a landmark event in the life of the Convention. It set a new record in terms of participation, totalling over 4,000 participants representing some 160 Governments and 885 organizations. A total of 34 decisions were adopted, underlining the commitment of the parties to further enhance the implementation phase of the Convention. They stressed the need to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and the three objectives of the Convention. To that end, they invited the General Assembly at its sixty-first session to proclaim 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. The parties reaffirmed the role of the Convention as the key international instrument in setting the global biodiversity agenda as well as its contribution to the efforts of the international community towards a more sustainable future.

3. A number of memorandums of understanding and agreements were concluded between the secretariat of the Convention and other organizations on the margins of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. They include:

(a) An agreement for the establishment of a head of agency task force for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target with the participation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the World Conservation Union, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the International Plant Genetics Resources Institute;

(b) A memorandum of understanding with the following six major institutions to support the enhanced implementation phase of the Convention: the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History; the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle de France; the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation; the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences; and the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development of Saudi Arabia;

(c) A memorandum of understanding with the Universidade Livre do Meio Ambiente to promote education, training and public awareness focusing on youth and children;

(d) An agreement signed with the World Conservation and Monitoring Centre of UNEP for the implementation of relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session in the area of technical support and capacity-building.

4. For the first time in the history of the Convention, an interactive high-level ministerial segment was organized from 27 to 29 March 2006 with the participation of 130 ministers and other heads of delegation. The meeting was opened by the President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The participants considered the implications of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the contribution of biodiversity in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. They also considered the imperative of mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors, specifically food and agriculture and trade and development, for the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. Ministers and other heads of delegation stressed that the 2010 target and the Millennium Development Goals should be mutually supportive. The ministers marked the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. More than 300 participants attended a working breakfast for ministers and chief executive officers of private companies. A total of 97 ministers and other heads of delegation made formal statements presenting their national experiences regarding the implementation of the Convention. A summary of the high-level segment was submitted by the President of the Conference of the Parties, Marina Silva, Minister of the Environment of Brazil, at the closure of the meeting.

5. The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties addressed a number of critical issues in the global biodiversity agenda that were central to the realization of the target of significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, which was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The meeting established an intersessional process for an in-depth review of the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan of the Convention. It stressed the need for the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and adopted voluntary guidelines to be used by parties for the review and updating of such strategies and action plans. The second Global Biodiversity Outlook, which was launched at the meeting, contained an overview of the status of implementation of the Convention, progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target and its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

6. At the meeting, particular emphasis was placed on the engagement of stakeholders for the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. A decision focusing exclusively on the engagement of the private sector was adopted. A number of decisions aimed at promoting the effective participation of indigenous and local communities in the Convention process were also adopted. The Conference decided to undertake an in-depth review of the availability of financial resources, including through the financial mechanism, at its ninth meeting. The review would, inter alia, examine how the Resource Allocation Framework adopted by the Global Environment Facility would affect the availability of resources, given the individual and group allocations to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for the implementation of the Convention.

7. One of the most significant achievements of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting was the adoption of a structured framework and a time frame for the further elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access to

genetic resources and benefit-sharing. The Conference of the Parties welcomed the progress made by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing in the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, and instructed the Working Group to complete its work at the earliest possible time before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in 2010.

8. At the programmatic level, the Conference of the Parties adopted a new programme of work on island biodiversity. It is the first time that the uniqueness and fragility of island biodiversity have been addressed through a specific work programme and in a manner that will provide for new partnerships. The programme of work sets out 50 priority island-specific actions, under five goals. The meeting also undertook an in-depth review of the programmes of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and the Global Taxonomy Initiative. The Conference of the Parties further stressed the importance of developing specific approaches to technology transfer and technological and scientific cooperation to address the prioritized needs of countries.

C. Outcome of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

9. The third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was attended by a total of 1,295 participants from 99 parties to the Protocol, 15 non-parties and 224 organizations. The meeting adopted 18 decisions on the following substantive issues: compliance under the Protocol; the Biosafety Clearing-House; capacity-building; the roster of biosafety experts; matters relating to financial mechanisms and resources; cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives; programme budget for the Protocol for the biennium 2007-2008; handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms (article 18 of the Protocol); risk assessment and risk management; liability and redress under the Protocol on Biosafety; subsidiary bodies; monitoring and reporting; assessment and review; and other issues, including transit.

10. A major breakthrough was made at the meeting regarding the issue of detailed requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing (para. 2 (a) of article 18 of the Protocol), on which agreement had eluded Governments since the negotiation of the Protocol. Parties to the Protocol are requested and other Governments are urged to take measures to ensure that documentation accompanying living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing contain the statements specified in paragraph 4 of the decision. The parties decided to review and assess the experience gained with the implementation of the agreed documentation requirements and to examine the capacity-building efforts made in developing countries in that regard at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

11. With regard to documentation for shipment of living modified organisms destined for contained use and living modified organisms intended for introduction into the environment (article 18, paras. 2 (b) and (c), respectively), participants

agreed to consider at their fourth meeting a report on the experience gained in the use of a commercial invoice or other documents required or utilized by existing documentation systems, or pursuant to national requirements with a view to future consideration of a stand-alone document.

12. The parties to the Protocol also took the first steps concerning the consideration of the need for and modalities of developing standards with regard to identification, handling, packaging and transport practices in accordance with article 18, paragraph 3, of the Protocol.

13. The issues of capacity-building, risk assessment and risk management, information-sharing and the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House remain central to the effective implementation of the Protocol. The meeting adopted a revised Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol, as well as measures to facilitate its implementation and effectiveness and to foster coordination and synergies between different capacity-building initiatives. A format for the first regular national report on implementation of the Protocol was adopted and a schedule and the process for the preparation and synthesis of the reports for consideration at the fourth meeting were established. Further guidance regarding measures to enhance the operation, accessibility and use of the Biosafety Clearing-House as well as measures for building capacities to enhance national participation in the Clearing-House was also provided.

14. Overall, the outcomes of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, in particular the decision on detailed requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing, generated renewed support for the Protocol. The new tools and mechanisms adopted and the additional guidance provided to parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and the Executive Secretary will significantly advance the practical implementation of the Protocol.

D. Specific outcomes of special interest to the General Assembly

15. At its eighth meeting, the Conference of the Parties addressed two aspects of biodiversity in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of deep seabed genetic resources; and marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction. In the case of deep seabed genetic resources, the Conference of the Parties recognized that there was an urgent need to enhance scientific research and cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of those resources. The Conference also indicated that it was aware of a preliminary range of options for the protection of deep seabed genetic resources beyond national jurisdiction, and emphasized the need for further work in developing them and other options, in particular within the framework of the United Nations. It recognized that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea regulated activities in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and other relevant organizations, to further analyse options for preventing and mitigating the impact of some activities on selected seabed habitats.

16. The discussions on the issue of marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction focused on the role of the Convention in relation to the General

Assembly, in particular, its Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The Conference of the Parties recognized the central role of the General Assembly in addressing issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. It also noted the work of the Working Group and the possible options and approaches identified by the Co-Chairpersons of the Working Group, including assessing the need for an implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Conference of the Parties invited the General Assembly, at its sixty-first session, to establish a timely follow-up process for the enhanced conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Conference of the Parties encouraged parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other Governments to actively participate in that process, and requested the Executive Secretary to continue to provide input relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Conference recognized that the Convention on Biological Diversity had a key role in supporting the work of the General Assembly with regard to marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction, by focusing on the provision of scientific and, as appropriate, technical information and advice relating to marine biological diversity, the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach, and in achieving the 2010 target.

17. In the area of agricultural biodiversity, the Conference adopted a cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition. The overall aim of the initiative is to promote and improve the sustainable use of biodiversity in programmes contributing to food security and human nutrition as a contribution to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 and related goals and targets.

18. The Conference of the Parties adopted a decision on genetic use restriction technologies. It reaffirmed its decision V/5, section III, which underlined the need for a precautionary approach to such technologies. Further research was encouraged and calls were made to respect traditional knowledge and farmers' rights to the preservation of seeds under traditional cultivation. The governing body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was invited to examine, within the context of its work, priorities, available resources, and the potential impact of genetic use restriction technologies, with special consideration of the impact on indigenous and local communities and associated traditional knowledge, smallholder farmers, and breeders and farmers' rights. The strong demand for capacity-building and technology transfer on that subject was noted, and there was a call to strengthen such support.

19. The Conference of the Parties re-emphasized the critical role of outreach and communication, education and public awareness in supporting the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. To that end, parties agreed to implement at the national and regional levels a short list of priority activities for the programme of work on communication, education and public awareness in support of the development and implementation of biodiversity strategies and action plans. In addition, the Conference of the Parties invited the General Assembly, at its sixty-first session, to consider adopting a resolution proclaiming 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity.

20. It should be noted, that for the first time, action has been taken to offset the environmental impact of Convention processes. A memorandum of understanding was signed by the Executive Secretary and the Governor of the State of Parana (Brazil) for planting, before the end of 2006, 8 million trees in the State of Parana to offset the environmental impact of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. A similar agreement was signed by the Executive Secretary and Wangari Mathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, to plant trees in Africa through the Green Belt Movement to offset the environmental impact of the meetings organized by the secretariat.

E. Recommendations

21. **The General Assembly may, at its sixty-first session, wish, inter alia:**

(a) **To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session;**

(b) **To note the outcome of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;**

(c) **To also note the outcome of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;**

(d) **To express its deep appreciation to the Government of Brazil for successfully hosting the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;**

(e) **To express its deep appreciation also to the Government of Germany for its offer to host both the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in 2008;**

(f) **To recall paragraph 56 (c) of its resolution 60/1 on the 2005 World Summit, in which Heads of State and Government resolved that all States would fulfil their commitment to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 and continue ongoing efforts towards elaborating and negotiating an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing;**

(g) **To endorse the draft resolution submitted by the Conference of the Parties and declare 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity;**

(h) **To welcome the progress made in the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing and the decision to conclude negotiations by 2010, and urge parties to make every effort to complete the negotiation process within the established time frame;**

(i) **To recognize the key role of the Convention on Biological Diversity in supporting the work of the General Assembly with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national**

jurisdiction, by focusing on the provision of scientific and, as appropriate, technical information and advice relating to marine biological diversity, the application of the ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach, and in achieving the 2010 target;

(j) To note the progress made by the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in establishing an effective framework for the implementation of the Protocol, and stress that it would require the full support of parties and of relevant international organizations, in particular with regard to the provision of assistance to developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition in capacity-building for biosafety;

(k) To urge States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention;

(l) To urge parties to the Convention that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Protocol to do so as soon as possible;

(m) To invite the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to submit to the sixty-second General Assembly a report on the ongoing work regarding the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.